

July 30, 2010

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House of Representatives passed an amendment by Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) to dedicate up to \$1.2 billion in oil spill penalties from BP to Gulf coastal restoration projects. The amendment was offered to the *Consolidated Land, Energy, and Aquatic Resources* (CLEAR) Act (H.R. 3534).

[In a speech](#) on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives urging his colleagues to support the amendment, Congressman Melancon said, **“BP will foot the bill for the clean up effort. We’ll hold them to their responsibility and their word. But they are not legally bound to address the accelerated land loss as a result of the spill.**

**“My amendment will make certain they don’t simply clean the water and walk away from the long-term damage to our coast and marshes.”**

Congressman Melancon continued, **“Survival of the Gulf Coast’s fragile ecosystems -- and the fishing and tourism industries that rely on them -- hinges upon successful restoration of our wetlands. Without them, many Gulf communities will vanish and the rest of the country will lose access to the seafood and recreation that they have enjoyed for decades.**

Congressman Melancon concluded, **“We are staring at a clean-up that will take a decade or more to complete. We will only get there if we address our disappearing coast.”**

[Click here](#) to view Congressman Melancon’s speech. The text of Congressman Melancon’s full speech, as prepared for delivery, is copied below.

The Melancon Gulf Coast Restoration Amendment would create a new civil penalty for any oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico of more than 1 million barrels, including the BP disaster. The penalty would be \$200 million per 1 million barrels spilled. Recent estimates indicate that up to 5.2 million barrels have leaked into the Gulf as a result of the BP disaster, which would result in a penalty of up to \$1.2 billion dedicated to coastal restoration along the Gulf. The amendment is deficit neutral and comes at no cost to taxpayers or to the federal government.

The Melancon amendment would direct the penalty to a new Gulf of Mexico Restoration Account to fund coastal restoration projects. The fund would be overseen by the Gulf Coast Restoration Council, a task force composed of federal, state, and local representatives. Civil penalties for oil spills are established by the federal Water Pollution Control Act (also known as the “Clean Water Act”), which the federal government must sue to collect.

Congressman Melancon represents in Congress the areas of coastal Louisiana most directly affected by the oil leak, including Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary and southern Jefferson Parishes. The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Louisiana’s Third Congressional District.

Congressman Melancon's Remarks on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives in Support of the Melancon Gulf Coast Restoration Amendment  
July 30, 2010

*Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support my Gulf Coast Restoration Amendment for one simple reason: responsible oil-spill response legislation must include funding to address the rapid deterioration of our crumbling coast.*

*Coastal erosion has chipped away at our barrier islands, beaches and marshes for decades. Louisiana alone loses a football field of coast every 38 minutes and is set to lose another 500 square miles by 2050. But the BP oil spill will accelerate land loss as our marshes die from exposure to oil and chemicals from the clean up. This disaster has effectively hit the fast forward button on an already terrible problem.*

*BP will foot the bill for the clean up effort. We'll hold them to their responsibility and their word. But they are not legally bound to address the accelerated land loss as a result of the spill. My amendment will make certain they don't simply clean the water and walk away from the long-term damage to our coast and marshes.*

*My amendment would create a new civil penalty on Gulf Coast spills of more than 1 million barrels. The owner or operator of the rig would be responsible for paying \$200 million per 1 million barrels spilled to fund environmental restoration projects to save the Gulf Coast. Restoration projects would be spread across Gulf Coast states and would be overseen by the Gulf Coast coordination council – a task force of federal, state, and local stakeholders - created by this bill.*

*My amendment is deficit neutral and comes at no cost to taxpayers or to the federal government.*

*Survival of the Gulf Coast's fragile ecosystems -- and the fishing and tourism industries that rely on them -- hinges upon successful restoration of our wetlands. Without them, many Gulf communities will vanish and the rest of the country will lose access to the seafood and recreation that they have enjoyed for decades.*

*The Gulf Coast is America's working coast. We contribute \$3 trillion annually to the U.S. economy. Seven of our country's top ten ports are located in the Gulf, and 40 percent of our nation's seafood is harvested in Gulf waters. President Obama has charged the oil spill response team with finding long-term solutions for repairing our coast. Our families back home are depending on Congress to restore their livelihoods. We have that opportunity today.*

*Earlier this month, just after news broke that BP had finally capped their well, Bob Marshall of the The Times-Picayune wrote a lengthy column about the long road ahead for south Louisiana and this cleanup.*

*He wrote: Quote: "We need to remember this is a temporary problem on top of a permanent disaster. Long after BP's oil is gone, we'll still be fighting for survival against a much more serious enemy - our sinking, crumbling delta.*

*"Our coast is like a cancer patient who has come down with pneumonia. That's serious, but curable. After the fever breaks, he'll still have cancer.*

*"Our officials'...focus should remain on stopping the activities that continue to destroy our marshes, and getting national support for projects that can protect what we have left."*

*He's right. And make no mistake, this is that time.*

*Five years after Hurricane's Katrina and Rita, our country is again focused on a tragedy in south Louisiana. For the past 102 days, every time you opened your paper, or tuned on the evening news, you saw the well, our oiled marshes and wildlife, and our people, struggling to get through the day, and unable to imagine a better tomorrow.*

*We are staring at a clean-up that will take a decade or more to complete. We will only get there if we address our disappearing coast.*

*Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support my Gulf Coast Restoration Amendment. This is that time. We can't wait another day.*

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